

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONDITIONS OF JUSTIFICATION

The only condition requested by the New Testament in order to familiarise the work of Salvation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Faith. This Faith must not be only at the beginning but even during the growth and progress of Justification. It must not be the work of the mind but the possession of moral attributes, **influencing all** the inner man, hiding **the inner power** of all those virtues which, when they bear fruit, will **comprise** the treasure of love. Thus man has the right through **Faith which is** “...*working through love*.”¹ Faith, without works **that** are achieved through the Grace of Christ, **are** “*dead*.”² This is the opinion of all **Holy** Fathers of the Orthodox Church. Salvation is offered to us through “*Grace*”³ and “...*not by works of righteousness which we have done*.”⁴ One is convinced when he recalls **that our** Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only sinless **One Who** became the **Ideal and Perfect** moral **Example**, compared to **Whom we fall short**. **Consequently** we are **always guilty**. Even these moral good works, which prove to be active and justify the **Faith**, are the “...*fruit of the Spirit*.”⁵ It was correctly stressed that God, rewarding these good deeds in each Christian, **crowns** the **Gifts** themselves.

The reward **of good** deeds and virtues in Christ is relative **but** not absolute. **Hence**, under no circumstances can **we** speak **of** abundance of reward, especially **in regard to** the extraordinary works of the Holy Saints. Extraordinary good works which make **Justice** much more abundant, do not exist, for even if “...*you have done all those things which you are commanded... ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.*”⁶ Again it is written “...*there is none righteous, no, not one.*”⁷

Since the good deeds are inseparable from the **Faith** and are the fruit of it, they are necessary for Salvation.⁸ It is understandable that offences of **Evangelical Law** **may** disqualify one from Salvation. Henceforth **St John the Evangelist, Apostle and Theologian** assured us that “...*there is sin leading to death...*” and “...*there is sin not leading to death.*”⁹ The first sin **that** “...*leads to death...*” infests the Justification in Christ. **This develops** into “...*the blasphemy against the Spirit...*” which “...*will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*”¹⁰ The second sin “...*not leading to death...*” occurs either because one was carried away **in the moment** or because of one’s daily weaknesses. If the one who has fallen runs to correct his errors through the Holy Mystery of Repentance and Confession, he will be forgiven.

¹ Gal. 5:6.

² James 2:17, 20, 26.

³ Tit. 3:7. Rom. 11:6. Ephes. 2:5, 8.

⁴ Tit. 3:5.

⁵ Gal. 5:22. Ephes. 5:9.

⁶ Luke 17:10.

⁷ Rom. 3:10. Psalm 14(15):1-3.

⁸ Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 9 and 13, pp. 32, 36.

⁹ 1 John 5:16-17.

¹⁰ Matth. 12:31, 32.

1. The True Meaning of Justifying Faith

“We conclude that a man is justified by Faith.”¹¹ However, this Faith that justifies is not simply some kind of mental consent or fruitless knowledge. It is right from the beginning connected to Repentance according to the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who said: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.”¹² For this reason it becomes the focus and source of Light which enlightens all the spiritual powers of man, moving his whole inner world and shining its Life-giving radiance within the depths of his soul. This Faith is not a work of the mind but takes up the nature of moral work from which the *diakonia* (ministry) of the Word aims towards “...the obedience of Faith.”¹³

At the beginning Faith appears to be a Heavenly Enlightenment of the mind. But since all the spiritual powers are connected very closely and inseparably, it is natural that this Enlightenment, if it is real and not a spark of the moment that shines in the darkness of the night, will not leave the heart unmoved and will not allow the will to fall into inactivity or lethargy. The Faith, even at its beginning, being united to the return and repentance, and generally to the work of Preparation Grace, has moral attributes, which, when perfected by Divine Grace proves Faith to be active in Love. Consequently pure Faith only intellectually, not in reality, is different to Love.¹⁴

True Faith and sincere Love influence one another in a very close relationship such as in that between the heart and the rest of the body. The former nourishes and gives life to the body while the latter supports and gives life to the heart. Likewise is the relationship between Faith and Love. Faith is the Life-giving Power that nourishes and strengthens Love and vice versa. Sinful life weakens the Light of Faith and can even completely extinguish it. On the contrary, the warmer and greater Love is in deeds, the stronger Faith becomes. As the mind becomes cleaner and purer through Love, being the eye of the soul, the more it is Enlightened by the Light of Faith. It becomes stronger and more skilful towards perfecting the understanding of its essence, according to the words of our Lord and Saviour: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”¹⁵ The conformity to the Commandments of the Great Shepherd and Physician of our souls¹⁶ make our Faith and trust in Him stronger.

2. Unformed, Formed, Abridged and Dead Faith

From the above it is very clear that the Orthodox Church calls the first Faith “unformed Faith” (“*fidem informem*”) which leads one to the Saviour and introduces one to the Justification in Christ. This is different to that of the fullness of understanding and fruitful works of Love that is referred to as “formed Faith” (“*fides formatem*”). One can accept this if he is not alienated from Love and good deeds. We call the first Faith “unformed” firstly because it has not yet produced its fruits which are the works of Love and secondly, because it has not become knowledge and understanding. It has nevertheless a form because it is not simply mental acceptance but has already borne its fruits. Repentance

¹¹ Rom. 3:28.

¹² Mark 1:15. Matth. 4:17; 10:7.

¹³ Rom. 1:5.

¹⁴ Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 242.

¹⁵ Matth. 5:8.

¹⁶ 1 Peter 2:25.

is the avoidance of sinful life, which is the first step towards our Saviour, consisting of good deeds and fruits of Faith.

It is possible that the justified man has not received the full knowledge of the essence of this Faith but has accepted the main guidelines of this Faith and its Doctrines with all his heart. This Faith being “*abridged Faith*” (“*fides implicita*”), represents the passive nature of Faith without being completely alien from its active part, which represents mostly the “*formed Faith*” (“*fides formata*”) that produces the full fruit of Love. He who is justified through Faith, in his first steps, accepts more and acts less. However, as he progresses in Justification and grows in Sanctification, his faith becomes more active through Love and becomes more energetic.

The “*unformed Faith*” is different to that of “*dead faith*,” which is simple and indefinite knowledge that cannot cleanse man’s will nor can it influence his heart. Nevertheless, we must not forget that it is easier for “*unformed Faith*” to fall and become “*dead and lifeless faith*.” If he who has returned and has been Justified does not persist in his struggle for virtue and cultivation of Love, he will lose his initial enthusiasm and the first radiance of Enlightenment. Consequently he will become “*...shortsighted, even to blindness...*”¹⁷ and will forget “*...that he was cleansed from his old sins...*” and he will eventually “*...return to his own vomit.*”¹⁸

3. About Justifying Faith

The Teaching of the Justifying and Sanctifying Faith, which is combined with good works as its fruits, is based upon Holy Scripture. It is proclaimed very clearly by St Paul the Apostle that “*...in Christ Jesus...*” nothing “*...avails anything, but Faith working through Love*”...¹⁹ and if someone has “*...all the Faith...*” making it possible to “*... remove mountains, but has not Love...*” he has “*nothing.*”²⁰ St John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian assured us that “*...this is the Commandment of God...*” “*...that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another.*”²¹ St James the Adelphotheus (“*Brother of Christ*”), stressed that “*...the testing of your Faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*”²²

Because of the close relationship between Faith and good works, Salvation appears as fruit of the Faith, through which only “*...we having been justified by Faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have access by Faith into this Grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*”²³ “*For by Grace you have been saved through Faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”²⁴ For this reason our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assures us that “*...he who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*”²⁵ In other cases Justification and Salvation depend upon the

¹⁷ 2 Peter 1:9.

¹⁸ 2 Peter 1:22. Prov. 26:11.

¹⁹ Gal. 5:6.

²⁰ 1 Corinth. 13:2.

²¹ 1 John 3:23.

²² James 1:3-4.

²³ Rom. 5:1-2.

²⁴ Ephes. 2:8-9.

²⁵ Mark 16:16.

good works and appear as fruits of Love. Thus our Lord assured us that when He returns to Judge the living and the dead, He “...will reward each according to his works...”²⁶ calling those who practiced good to inherit “...the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.”²⁷ St John also **taught** that “...he who does not love his brother abides in death...”²⁸ and that “...everyone who loves is born of God and knows God...”²⁹ and that “...he who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”³⁰ St James again **emphasised** that “...a man is justified by works, and not by Faith only.”³¹ Finally, St Paul excluded the fornicators, the idolaters, the adulterers, the homosexuals, the sodomites, the thieves, the covetous, the drunkards, the revilers and the extortioners **from God’s Kingdom as they would not** “...inherit the Kingdom of God.”³²

St Paul **repeatedly taught** “...that a man is justified by Faith apart from the deeds of the law...”³³ and that “...a man is not justified by the works of the law but by Faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by Faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”³⁴ By **means of** these statements St Paul had in mind on the one hand the ceremonial orders of the Law³⁵ whereas on the other hand, he **referred** to “...their own righteousness...” which they (the Jews) “...being ignorant of God’s righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”³⁶ The Jews were seeking, as St Paul did before his return to Christ, their Justification through their own works and the practice of the Mosaic Law. “So you shall keep all My ordinances, and all My judgments, and do them; which if a man do, he shall live in them.”³⁷ They did not **consider the words of the Lord** “...cursed is every man that continues not in all the words of this law to do them...”³⁸ and consequently “...every man who becomes circumcised ... is a debtor to keep the whole law.”³⁹ **Therefore**, no one **who remains in the Law** is Justified by God because no one can **observe** all the Law **perfectly** and not fall **into fault**. Hence, St Paul **advised** us to avoid circumcision for “...if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing...”⁴⁰ **as** “...you have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law... have fallen from Grace.”⁴¹ **According to** this opinion St Paul proclaimed that “...a man is not justified by the works of the law...”⁴² not because he does not consider the works of Love **as being** important for Salvation **but because without the Grace of Christ, the works remain fruitless**. In Galatians he stressed⁴³ on the one hand, the Grace of Justification and Salvation through Faith and not by the works of the Law, while **on the other hand** he assured us that those who practice the works of the flesh “...shall not inherit the

²⁶ Matth. 16:27.

²⁷ Matth. 25:34.

²⁸ 1 John 3:14.

²⁹ 1 John 4:7.

³⁰ 1 John 4:7.

³¹ James 2:24.

³² 1 Corinth. 6:10.

³³ Rom. 4:28.

³⁴ Gal. 2:16.

³⁵ Rom. 3:28. Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 5:6. Col. 2:16 and Gal. 5:2.

³⁶ Rom. 10:3.

³⁷ Lev. 18:5. Rom. 10:5.

³⁸ Deut. 27:26.

³⁹ Gal. 5:3.

⁴⁰ Gal. 5:2.

⁴¹ Gal. 5:4.

⁴² Gal. 2:16.

⁴³ Gal. 5:19-24.

Kingdom of God.”⁴⁴ For “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”⁴⁵ “...for whatever a man sows... he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing well, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do well to all, especially to those who are of the household of Faith.”⁴⁶

St Paul emphasised Justification “...by Faith.”⁴⁷ St James assured us that “...man is justified through works and not only by works alone...”⁴⁸ and that “...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”⁴⁹ These two Apostles seem to differ on their basic opinions. There are some works without which Faith is dead but again they are the works of the Law that are not required in order to be justified in Christ, as for example circumcision and the ceremonial orders.⁵⁰ So when St James asked: “Can Faith save you?”⁵¹ he had in mind that Faith which even the demons have and which makes them “tremble”⁵² because their faith lacks love that proves the living Faith.

Damalas observed that “...this Justifying Faith is sufficient to justify man in the Holy Baptism and only through it man is justified, but there is another Justification which takes place in the future life which is complete and perfect, which is done by Faith and good works.”⁵³

Makarinos noted that “...under the term Justification the Apostle (Paul) has in mind the type of Justification which every sinner, Jew or gentile, receives in the Mystery of Baptism at the time of his return to Christianity and which is offered to us only through Faith in Christ and which is not manifested yet in the works of the Law. But he never means that Justification that every Christian desires to be found worthy of before the Heavenly Judge who ‘imputes righteousness apart from works.’”^{54,55} Balanos expressed the same opinion.⁵⁶

However, the works that will proclaim us finally Justified at the Second Coming of our Lord will be due to the fruits of the Faith performed in this life and which cannot be separated from the Justification of the Faith in Baptism. We must also never forget that in relation to future Life, we can only speak of the perfection of Justification and the Glorification of those who, in this life, have been Justified. St Paul said that “...who He justified, these He also glorified.”⁵⁷ Under no circumstances can we speak of a second Justification. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promised us that “...whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life...”⁵⁸ and “...shall not come

⁴⁴ Gal. 5:21.

⁴⁵ Gal. 5:22.

⁴⁶ Gal. 6:7-10.

⁴⁷ Gal. 2:20.

⁴⁸ James 2:24.

⁴⁹ James 2:17.

⁵⁰ St. Ecumenius, *To James 2:14*, in Migne, P.G., 119, 480.

⁵¹ James 2:14.

⁵² James 2:19.

⁵³ Damalas, *About Principals*, p. 132.

⁵⁴ Cf. Rom. 4:6.

⁵⁵ Makarinos, *Enchiridion*, II, p. 367.

⁵⁶ Balanos, in Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 253. Ibid, *Crisis*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁷ Rom. 8:30.

⁵⁸ John 3:15, 36.

into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”⁵⁹ This Life, according to St Paul, “...is hidden with Christ in God...” for “... when Christ Who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”⁶⁰ For this reason St Paul considered that Salvation through Justification has taken place “...for we were saved in this hope.”⁶¹ Furthermore in Jesus Christ “...by Grace (we) have been saved through Faith...”⁶² “...and raised ... up together, and ... sit together in the heavenly places.”⁶³

As Orthodox Christians we believe that Justifying Faith is alive and active which includes Justification and Sanctification as positive elements of Faith. Consequently the theory of the second Justification is unnecessary.

4. The Teachings of the Holy Fathers of Justifying Faith

The close and inseparable relationship between Faith and works is clearly proclaimed by the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church since the time of the Apostolic Fathers. Thus St Clement of Rome, although on the one hand stressing that we “...are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we have done in holiness of heart, but through Faith, by which the Almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning...”, and on the other hand adding “...What then do we do, brothers? Shall we idly abstain from doing well, and forsake love? May the Master never allow this to happen, at least to us; but let us hasten with earnestness and zeal to accomplish every good work.”⁶⁴ Further on he concluded: “The good worker receives the bread of his labour confidently, but the lazy and careless dares not look his employer in the face. It is, therefore, necessary that we should be zealous of doing well, for all things come from Him. For He forewarns us: ‘Behold, the Lord comes, and His reward is with Him, to pay each one according to his work.’⁶⁵ He exhorts us, therefore, who believe in Him with our whole heart, not to be idle or careless about any good work.”⁶⁶ The same Apostolic Father wrote in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: “Indeed, He Himself says, ‘whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will acknowledge before My Father.’⁶⁷ This, then, is our reward, if we acknowledge Him through Whom we were saved. But how do we acknowledge Him? By doing what He says and not disobeying His commandments, and honouring Him not only with our lips but ‘with our whole heart and with our whole mind.’^{68,69} “Let us, therefore, not just call Him Lord, for this will not save us. For He says, ‘Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will be saved, but only the one who does what is right.’⁷⁰ So then, brothers, let us acknowledge Him in our actions by loving one another, by not committing adultery or slandering one another or being jealous, but by being self-controlled, compassionate, and kind. And we ought to have sympathy for one another, and not be avaricious. By these

⁵⁹ John 5:24.

⁶⁰ Col. 3:3-4.

⁶¹ Rom. 8:24.

⁶² Ephes. 2:8.

⁶³ Ephes. 2:6.

⁶⁴ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 32, 4 – 33, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁵ Cf. Is. 40:10; 62:11. Prov. 24:12. Rev. 22:12.

⁶⁶ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 34, 1-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁷ Cf. Matth. 10:32.

⁶⁸ Cf. Mark 12:30.

⁶⁹ St. Clement of Rome, *2nd Corinthians*, 3, 2-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 69.

⁷⁰ Cf. Matth. 7:21.

actions let us acknowledge Him, and not by their opposites. Further, we must fear more not men but God.”⁷¹

St Ignatius the Theophorus of Antioch proclaimed: “None of these things escapes your notice, if you have perfect Faith and love towards Jesus Christ. For these are the beginning and end of life: Faith is the beginning, and love is the end, and the two, when they exist in unity, are God. Everything else that contributes to excellence follows from them. No one professing Faith sins, nor does anyone possessing love hate. ‘The tree is known by its fruit’⁷²; thus those who profess to be Christ’s will be recognised by their actions. For the Work⁷³ is not a matter of what one promises now, but of persevering to the end in the power of Faith.”⁷⁴

St Polycarp of Smyrna in Asia Minor urged the Philippians by saying: “... neither I nor anyone like me can keep pace with the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who, when he was among you in the presence of the men of that time,⁷⁵ accurately and reliably taught the word concerning the truth. And when he was absent he wrote you letters; if you study them carefully, you will be able to build yourselves up in the Faith that has been given to you, ‘which is the mother of us all,’⁷⁶ while hope follows and love for God and Christ and for our neighbour leads the way. For if anyone is occupied with these, he has fulfilled the commandment of righteousness, for one who has love is far from all sin.”⁷⁷

Theophilus of Antioch referring to himself said: “I believe in being disciplined to God...” and he observed that man “...pleases God through faith and justice and good deeds.”⁷⁸

St Cyril of Jerusalem stressed that “...God-fearing consists of two ways:; the accurate pious Doctrines and the good works; and neither the Doctrines without the good works nor the works without the pious Doctrines are acceptable to God. What then is the benefit of knowing the things of God very well but practicing adultery?”⁷⁹

St John Chrysostom declared that one must “... stand upon the true Faith and show a perfect way of Life. For if we do not add a worthy life to our Faith, we will be held accountable at the Last Judgment.”⁸⁰

St John of Damascus believed that Faith “...is perfected in all by the Commandments of Christ in works, being pious and practising His Commandments for he who does not believe according the catholic Church or is in communion with the devil through inappropriate works, is an unbeliever.”⁸¹

⁷¹ St. Clement of Rome, 2nd Corinthians, 4, 1-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 69.-70.

⁷² Cf. Matth. 12:33.

⁷³ Work: i.e., Christianity. Cf. Rom. 3:3.

⁷⁴ St. Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians*, 14, 1-2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 90-91.

⁷⁵ Cf. Acts 16:12.

⁷⁶ Gal. 4:26.

⁷⁷ St. Polycarp of Smyrna, *To Philippians*, 3, 2-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 124.

⁷⁸ Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus I*, 14 and *Autolycus II*, 38, in *B*, v. 5, pp. 20 and 50.

⁷⁹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, IV, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 456.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, Homily 64, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 614.

⁸¹ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About faith*, IV, 83, 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1128.

St Cyril of Alexandria stated that “... *Faith is to know the one God Who is by nature Holy and to confess Him without any deceit and truthfully. However, even this is lifeless if it is not followed by the brightness of good works.*”⁸² Elsewhere he observed that “...*for those who wish to approach God, they must have the True Faith followed by a clean life according to the measure of human capabilities.*”⁸³

5. The Worthiness of Good Works

Thus good works appear to be necessary **in order** to achieve Salvation. Hence they are proclaimed by Holy Scripture as being worthy of reward. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Commanded us to practise **the giving of alms so as** to “...*lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven...*”⁸⁴ and to “...*provide yourselves with... a treasure in Heaven that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.*”⁸⁵ **The promised** inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom has been prepared **since** the foundation of the world for those who practise good works of Love and **who are** generous to Christ’s poor brethren **of** this world.⁸⁶

In the New Testament it is stressed that “...*each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour...*”⁸⁷ and according to their work. At the Second Coming “...*each one’s work will become clear, for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*”⁸⁸ Christ will “...*render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honour and peace to everyone who works what is good.*”⁸⁹ “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the Will of God, you may receive the promises.*”⁹⁰ “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown but we for an imperishable crown...*”⁹¹ “...*for God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His Name.*”⁹² At the end of St Paul’s life he wrote: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*”⁹³

⁸² St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book IX, in Migne, P.G., 74, 125.

⁸³ *Ibid*, *To Luke 13:23*, in Migne, P.G., 72, 776.

⁸⁴ Matth. 6:20.

⁸⁵ Luke 12:33.

⁸⁶ Matth. 25: 34, 40.

⁸⁷ 1 Corinth. 3:8.

⁸⁸ 1 Corinth. 3:13-15.

⁸⁹ Rom. 2:6-10.

⁹⁰ Heb. 10:35-36.

⁹¹ 1 Corinth. 9:24-25.

⁹² Heb. 6:10.

⁹³ 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

It is true that our good deeds are not free of imperfection or that even our most perfect good deed, when compared to God's Work, is vastly different. Nevertheless, good works do not lose their good nature, regardless of man's weakness and egoistic nature. Not all Orthodox Christians achieve the highest level of their perfection. This does not mean that they are not virtuous according to their ability or as in the Parable of the Sower⁹⁴ like those seeds that "...fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."⁹⁵

The reward of good works is not absolute but relative. It is relative not only because of their imperfection but because they comprise the fruits that the Lord presents through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, as He declared: "...for without Me you can do nothing."⁹⁶ And it is true that Christ produces them with the cooperation of man but even this cooperation, although essential for the Action of Divine Grace, is not a serious prerequisite for the bearing of the fruit of virtue. Without the fire of Divine Grace, the good intention of man would not have been alive and thus it would not have developed into a genuine cooperation between man and the Grace of God. "For, it is God Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."⁹⁷

Correctly St Augustine observed that God, by rewarding the works of virtue "...is crowning His Gifts."⁹⁸

It is the Love of God and His *Philanthropia* ("Love of mankind") which are the sources and reasons for the reward of good works. Only in absolute humility can man request, as son by adoption, to receive his reward. We must never forget that when we ask for anything of God it is very different to when we ask for anything from our fellow man. Furthermore, we must never forget that whatever good we have is from God and only with sincere humility may we ask God to give us what He promised.⁹⁹ Thus Salvation is granted by Grace and as a Gift. It is God's Love that combines human virtue with Heavenly Blessedness, as manifested in the Parable of the Great Banquet.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Matth. 13:3-9. Mark 4:1-9. Luke 8:4-8.

⁹⁵ Matth. 13:8.

⁹⁶ John 15:5.

⁹⁷ Phil. 2:13.

⁹⁸ St. Augustine, *De gratia et lib. arbit*, c. 6, § 15, in migne, *P.L.*, 44, 891.

⁹⁹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 158, c. 2, in migne, *P.L.*, 38, 863.

¹⁰⁰ Matth. 22:2-14. Luke 14:15-24.